Perrot, John

(*d.* 1665)

- Nigel Smith

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Perrot, John (*d.* 1665), Quaker schismatic, was born in Ireland. The *Dictionary of National Biography* suggested that he may have been a descendant of one of the illegitimate sons of Sir John Perrot (1528–1592), lord deputy of Ireland; however, his name does not seem to appear in the nineteenth-century account of the family by Edward Barnwell. It was also claimed that he was a blacksmith from Sedbergh although this too has since been discounted.

Perrot was living 2 miles outside Waterford when, in 1655, he became a Quaker following a convincement by Edward Burrough; Perrot's wife and children were noted as still living there in 1659. Like many other early Quakers, Perrot had previously been a Baptist. In 1656 he was active as a Quaker missionary in Ireland, preaching in Limerick, where he was imprisoned twice in April, and in Kilkenny, where he was also incarcerated. He also suffered a spell in gaol in Dublin in May 1656, during which he wrote a work—never published—against the 'loathsome Abominacons' of lawyers (Carroll, 4). On his return to Kilkenny he intervened on behalf of a large group of imprisoned Irish Roman Catholics who were facing deportation, successfully gaining them their freedom. For his efforts in Ireland Perrot was described by Burrough—himself expelled from the country early in 1656—as 'Eminent in the nation' (Ingle, 198). Among the most prominent figures who knew Perrot at this time was the physician and friend of Samuel Hartlib, Benjamin Worsley, the surveyor-general of forfeited estates in Ireland; Perrot corresponded with Worsley and sought financial support for him for his later mission to the Mediterranean.

On 17 August 1656 Perrot experienced a vision at Cathrelagh:

The word of the Lord came unto me … saying … behold I the Lord who have chosen thee from amongst men, doe Send thee into a farr country having given thee a sharpeInstrum[en]tt to thresh upon the Mountaines of Turkey.

Carroll, 9

At some point after this he left for England where on 25 December he signed one of the many petitions seeking the mitigation of the sentence of James Nayler, the Quaker who had notoriously re-enacted Jesus's entry into Jerusalem at Bristol in October. It is not known whether Perrot ever met Nayler, but as a letter of Perrot's written in early 1657 describes Nayler's 'agents' as 'creeping upon their Bellyes' and Martha Simmonds as 'their Miserable Mother', it is clear that he was not sympathetic to Nayler's views (Carroll, 10). During his stay in England Perrot spent periods in London and the west country.

In May or June 1657, with the full support and financial backing of the Quaker movement, Perrot embarked on a mission, with five others, to the Ottoman empire to convert the sultan and to Rome to convert the pope. His companions were Beatrice Beckley, Mary Prince, Mary Fisher, John Luffe, and John Buckley. They reached Leghorn via Lyons on 6 August 1657, and after holding services there for two weeks and meeting with the local Jewish community—using Latin as a

common language—they were examined by the Inquisition. While in Leghorn, Perrot wrote *Immanuel, the Salvation of Israel*, which was published in London the following year. Following an interview with the local governor on 17 August, the group sailed for the island of Zante, just off the Turkish coast, on 20 August. Shortly after their arrival there on 6 September, the party divided. One group, including Fisher and Beckley, headed for Crete, while Perrot and Buckley travelled overland, via Corinth and Athens, to the island of Negroponte (Evvoia) and to Smyrna, where the group was to reunite. In Athens Perrot wrote *To All the Baptists*, later published in 1660. The two men also preached in the city on 27 September and debated with two Greek priests. They were held for a time at Negroponte where, during that same month, Perrot wrote *An Epistle to the Greeks*, later published in 1661. The two arrived in Smyrna (now Izmir) very late in 1657, the rest of their group having been there since 18 November. The English consul, learning of their plans to meet with the sultan, advised them to turn back; shortly afterwards all but Mary Prince left Smyrna for Venice, but weather forced them to return to Zante. Here the group again divided: Fisher and Beckley travelled on to Adrianople (where they would meet the sultan) via the Peloponnese; Buckley headed for Constantinople; and Perrot and Luffe sailed to Venice, intending to reach Jerusalem.

After enduring treacherous weather (two passengers were killed during an electric storm) and the hostility of both crew and other passengers, Perrot and Luffe arrived in the Gulf of Venice on 25 February 1658. Disembarking on 22 March, the two men were quarantined in the leper colony of Lazzaretto for forty days. In total the men spent only about six or seven weeks in Venice, during which time they met with members of the Jewish community; Perrot also either had a meeting with the doge or sent him a document of some sort, which formed the occasion for *To the Prince of Venice* (1661), which Perrot wrote at this time. On 7 May they left for Rome, arriving at the city on 6 June and taking up lodgings in the Piazza Farnese. Perrot intended to meet with the pope, and so approached Thomas Courtney, a Jesuit and the English confessor in St Peter's Basilica; Perrot was referred to the pope's chaplain, John Crey, a fellow Irishman to whom Perrot explained his purpose 'as an unfolded sheet upon a smooth floor' (Carroll, 24). Two days later Perrot was arrested at his lodgings and interrogated by the city governor, who promised him 'a sudden, fair and public Tryal' (Carroll, 25). Luffe too seems to have been imprisoned at this time. After a week Perrot and Luffe were transferred to the Inquisition prison, where they were held for a further eighteen weeks. Upon further interrogation, Perrot was deemed mad and was taken to the ‘Pazzarella’, or ‘Prison of Madmen’; here both men were held in solitary confinement. By the end of 1658 Luffe was dead, officially from starvation through fasting although other evidence suggested that he may have been hanged—by one account, upon the orders of the pope himself.

Perrot spent three years in the Pazzarella in squalid conditions. He was chained by the neck for the first few days, and then by the ankle for the next fourteen weeks. He reported being regularly tortured—including being beaten with a pizzle, presumably in the belief that the insane could be beaten into sense. Support and sympathy came from Quakers in England, some of whom travelled to Rome to intercede on Perrot's behalf; George Fox himself expressed approval of Perrot's work in 1658. Eventual release came in late May or early June 1661, following the intervention of two other Quakers, Jane Stokes and Charles Bayly. The ill-fated mission prompted two Catholic accounts in the later 1660s—one by the German Jesuit Theodore Rhay, the other by Cosimo de' Medici's secretary, Lorenzo Magalotti—both of which record the story of Perrot and his companions with extensive refutation of their theology.

Perrot wrote numerous letters and works during his imprisonment, many of which were published after his release in 1661. The most notable were *Battering Rams Against Rome* (1661), a detailed account of his sufferings at the hands of the Roman Catholic authorities, dedicated 'To the tender, moderate, Roman-Catholick reader' (sig. A2*r*), and *A Sea of the Seed's Sufferings, through which Runs a River of Rich Rejoycing* (1661), an extraordinary series of contemplations and songs in a variety of

poetic forms, totalling some 1448 lines. The latter, a significant and unusual example of radical religious writing, indicated that Perrot was well read and familiar with poetic technique, and in its sublimation of his experiences of torture and abuse into a spiritual allegory built out of natural imagery (especially about the sea), the work bears some comparison with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. However, it was an unpublished letter sent from Rome that caused the most immediate sensation within the Quaker movement; in it Perrot argued that—contrary to Quaker practice—men should not remove their hats during prayer.

After a journey through Italy and France that saw Bayly imprisoned in Bourg-d'Ault for confronting some local priests, Perrot returned to England by late July and arrived in London in mid-August. Fox met with him at once in a series of meetings aimed at tempering Perrot's increasingly divergent Quaker views. Perrot was accused of financial extravagance during his mission in the Mediterranean, and his writings, especially his poetry, were regarded as an offence to the principle of plainness; moreover, Fox and other prominent Quakers saw Perrot's stance on hats as vain and lacking in humility, but, as St Paul had indicated that women should cover their head when praying, they found it difficult to oppose Perrot's argument without undermining the traditional Quaker hostility to social forms or appearing fundamentally inequitable. Undaunted, Perrot spent the next few months preaching in London, Canterbury (where he was imprisoned in September), and East Anglia; at some point before the following summer he also made a brief trip to Ireland. However, despite some support from Isaac Penington, Edward Burrough, and John Crook among others, leading Friends were unrelenting in their disapproval of Perrot: his enthusiastic preaching, his growing popularity particularly with women Friends, and even his Rabbinic-like beard reminded them uncomfortably of Nayler. It was averred that he had taken on his ministerial role too soon, a point underlined when Perrot began to hold his own meetings in London which only helped to enhance his reputation as a schismatic. It is also possible that Fox in particular feared Perrot's continuing influence over Quaker Mediterranean missions, for which Perrot continued to find funds for the support of Friends, especially if they had been imprisoned, and acted as mediator between Quakers and Italian Roman Catholics. A meeting between Perrot and senior Quaker figures in London on new year's eve 1661 prompted a final breach. By the time that Perrot was arrested and imprisoned in Newgate in June 1662 for attending a Quaker meeting at the Bull and Mouth in London, he had been roundly condemned by the Quaker leadership.

In return for his release, Perrot agreed to become a voluntary exile in Barbados. He left England with the strong disapproval of Fox, especially after his advocacy of unity among nonconformists—a view sustained by the clustering of several Perrot followers in Barbados. In the summer or autumn of 1663 Perrot visited Maryland and Virginia, where Quakers had been active since 1656, but was rejected by the Friends there who had possibly received warning letters from Fox. In Virginia Perrot advocated following no set or regular times for meetings but only as the spirit willed. In early 1664 he returned to Barbados and on 10 May the governor, Thomas Modyford, appointed him a captain. Thereafter, Perrot was famous for wearing a splendid satin coat and a sword though, more importantly, he received at the same time a 300 ton ship for transporting immigrants to Jamaica. In Barbados and Jamaica he then worked as a court clerk and, despite remaining a Friend, accepted payment for extracting the oaths that the Quakers refused to give. By this time Perrot had become firmly convinced of universalist principles (the belief that redemption is extended to all humankind), but the paper war with Fox continued unabated while others alleged that Perrot had renounced his faith for the sake of profit. Perrot continued to publish occasionally and became associated with Robert Rich, another Quaker separatist and sometime follower of Nayler who had emigrated to Barbados in the immediate aftermath of the Nayler affair. It may be that Perrot fell ill early in 1665 as he was certainly thinking of his death at that time; this finally occurred between 30 August, when he drew up his will, and 7 September 1665, when it was proved. In his will he mentioned a wife, Elizabeth, and two children. However, it was not until the following year, with the

publication by eleven senior Quakers in May of the '*Testimony from the brethren*', the recantation of several leading Perrot supporters at a London meeting hosted by Fox, and the establishment of regular monthly and quarterly meetings across the Quaker movement as a whole, that the Perrotian controversy was effectively quelled.

After Perrot's death Rich collected Perrot's letters to Fox and others, and these were published just after Rich's death as *Hidden Things Brought to Light* (1680).

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Perrot, Sir John

(1528–1592)

- Roger Turvey

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Perrot, Sir John (1528–1592), lord deputy of Ireland, was born between 7 and 11 November 1528, probably at Haroldston in Pembrokeshire, the principal seat of the Perrot family since its acquisition in 1442. He was possibly the youngest of the three children of Thomas Perrot (1504/5–1531), landowner, and his wife, Mary (*c.*1511–*c.*1586), daughter of James Berkeley (*d. c.*1515) of Thornbury, Gloucestershire, and Hilton, Cambridgeshire, and his wife, Susan (*d. c.*1521), widow of William Vele. His sisters Jane and Elizabeth married, respectively, William Philipps of Picton and John Price of Gogerddan.

Early life

Contrary to the popular and oft-quoted myth (the origin of which may be attributed to the work of Sir Robert Naunton), Perrot's mother was never a mistress of Henry VIII and he, consequently, was not the king's bastard son. His parents' marriage was arranged at great cost by Maurice, Lord Berkeley, who had purchased the wardship and marriage of both Mary, his niece, and Thomas Perrot two years after the death of Thomas's father, Sir Owen, in December 1521. Upon their marriage, some time after Thomas came of age in August 1526, and contingent on the will of Maurice, Lord Berkeley, the considerable sum of 500 marks was settled on the young couple. Like his father (Sir Owen died aged forty-one) and elder brother (Robert died aged eighteen in 1522), Thomas died tragically young, aged twenty-six years, on 19 September 1531.

Within a year of the death of his father, Perrot's mother had married Sir Thomas Jones (*d.* 1559) of Llanegwad and (from 1546) Abermarlais, Carmarthenshire, who then settled at Haroldston. The marriage (the second for both) produced five children, the eldest of whom, Sir Henry Jones (*d.* 1586), formed a particularly close relationship with his half-brother Perrot. Having acquired his stepson's wardship in February 1533, Jones set about the task of managing the Perrot estates and seeing to his ward's education and upbringing. We know little about Perrot's early life apart from the fact that he was brought up in a large household of ten children (his stepfather having two daughters from a previous marriage) and which seems to have been cosmopolitan in culture and religion and bilingual in speech. His Welsh-speaking stepfather patronized the bards, one of whom, Dafydd Fynglwyd, composed a poem (probably in the late 1530s or early 1540s) in praise of a clearly young Perrot, and, despite his own strong adherence to the Catholic faith, procured his stepson a place at the cathedral school at St David's, then in the care of the protestant bishop William Barlow. Here Perrot was introduced to what became a lifelong attachment to the protestant faith, and he also developed his flair for languages, becoming fluent, on his own admission and by the reports of contemporaries, in French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin.

London and the court

Aged eighteen Perrot proceeded to London where his stepfather's connections at court (he was groom of the chamber in 1513 and gentleman usher in 1532) secured him a place in the house of William Paulet, Lord St John, later first marquess of Winchester and lord treasurer of England. Here, in the company of Henry Neville, sixth Lord Bergavenny, and John de Vere, sixteenth earl of Oxford, Perrot completed his formal education. However, he soon gained an unenviable reputation for violence which, added to his arbitrary disposition, ensured a turbulent apprenticeship. He twice fell out with Neville, with whom he brawled once so violently that they reportedly broke glasses 'about one another's ears' so that 'blood besprinkled … the chamber'. It was to a fracas, in which he was injured, with two yeomen of the guard when going 'into Southwarke (as it was supposed to a place of pleasure) taking but a page with him' (Perrot, *History*, 26) that Perrot owed his introduction to Henry VIII. Unfortunately, owing to the king's untimely death, a promise of preferment never materialized, though Perrot need not have worried, for his connections were such as almost to guarantee him a place at the court of Edward VI. Besides the influence of his stepfather and of his patron, Paulet, who as lord president of the council may have been instrumental in securing Perrot's election to parliament (for Carmarthenshire) on the death of Sir Richard Devereux in November 1547, his uncle Rhys or Rice Perrot (*d.* 1571) was reader in Greek to the young king. Knighted by King Edward within a week of attaining his majority on 17 November 1549, Perrot had evidently aligned himself with John Dudley, earl of Warwick—with whose eldest son, Ambrose, he established a lifelong friendship—in the *coup d'état* against Protector Somerset. In February 1550 Perrot's stepfather formally relinquished his interest in his stepson's estates though it was not until May that process had been completed. The attractions of the court and the distractions of London life conspired to delay Perrot's first step into local administration and it was not until September 1552 that he was pricked, succeeding his cousin John Perrot (*d.* 1569) of Scotsborough, near Tenby, as sheriff of Pembrokeshire.

Chivalry and debts

As a result of his connections at court and his perceived skill in knightly exercises, in May 1551 Perrot accompanied the lord chamberlain, William Parr, marquess of Northampton, to France to negotiate a marriage between the teenage King Edward and the infant daughter of the French king, Princess Elizabeth. Perrot's reckless courage and passion for the hunt attracted the attention of a grateful king, Henri II, whom he saved from a life-threatening encounter with a wounded boar. Declining an invitation and generous pension to serve the French king, Perrot returned to England having enhanced his reputation for gallantry but denuded his purse of funds. At home his profligacy continued unabated and within a short time he found himself in considerable pecuniary difficulties. In a letter to a friend Perrot admitted to his reckless spending on 'the tilt and other toys I am ashamed to tell' (BL, Harley MS 5992, fol. 9). Forced to mortgage part of his Pembrokeshire estates to meet debts, reported by his biographer and son Sir James Perrot (1571/2–1637) to have been between £7000 and £8000, Sir John is said also to have sought the aid of a sympathetic King Edward, who persuaded the council to grant him a minimum £100 per annum from concealed lands which he might discover. The king's generosity notwithstanding, salvation for Perrot came in the shape of his mother and stepfather who between them made over a number of properties in Pembrokeshire, some of which were held in dower.

Marriage, too, may have eased the burden of debt inasmuch as Perrot could expect his bride, Ann, to be well provided for, she being the daughter of Sir Thomas Cheyney of Shurland, Kent. Tragically, his wife died in September 1553 while giving birth to a son, Thomas (*d.* 1594), who survived briefly to succeed his father in 1592. Unusually for the time, Perrot remained unmarried for some ten years until in 1563 or 1564 he took as his second wife Jane (*d.* 1593), daughter of Hugh Prust of Thorry, Devon, and widow of Lewis Pollard (*d.* 1563) of Oakford, Devon. Together they had three children, a son, William (*d.* 1587), and daughters Lettice and Ann. An active libido ensured that further

children were born to Perrot in less legitimate circumstances, of whom the following are known: Sir James, John (*b. c.*1565), Elizabeth, and an unnamed daughter.

Religion and military service

Cheyney's influence served Perrot well, and it was his father-in-law who, as lord warden of the Cinque Ports, ensured his return as member for Sandwich, Kent, in the Marian parliaments of 1553 and 1555. Unsurprisingly, the Marian restoration was not to Perrot's liking. The fact of his being a protestant did not at first militate against him with Queen Mary, who:

did favorhym very well, and would say that she did lykeexceedinge well of hym, and had a hope he would prove a worthy subject but that (as hir words were) he did smell of the smoake, meaninge thereby his religion.

Perrot, *History*, 36

However, he soon fell foul of the new regime. In January 1554 he clashed with the servants of William Somerset, third earl of Worcester, for which he was briefly imprisoned in the Fleet. Soon after he refused a commission by William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, to hunt down his co-religionists in south-west Wales, preferring instead to risk the wrath of the government by sheltering heretics in his home at Haroldston. Among those who had cause to thank Perrot for his protection were his uncle Rhys, Laurence Nowell and possibly his brother Alexander Nowell, and an otherwise unknown Mr Banister. Sure enough Perrot was denounced by a neighbour, Thomas Catherne of Prendergast, and was again briefly imprisoned in the Fleet. Undeterred, he continued to live dangerously by aligning himself with the opposition in parliament, resulting in another violent quarrel with Pembroke when the latter objected to his support of Sir Anthony Kingston and Sir Edward Hastings, closely followed by his arrest in April 1556 on suspicion of complicity in the Dudley conspiracy.

Lack of evidence and court connections saved Perrot from a longer spell of imprisonment, or worse, in the Fleet, but even he came to realize that the government was fast running out of patience and he out of luck. He thought it best to remove himself from the kingdom and, having made up his quarrel with Pembroke, he set sail with the earl's forces for France. Pembroke's earlier magnanimous gesture in supporting Perrot's suit for the castle and lordship of Carew, which won the queen's approval, and the fact of his younger son Sir Edward Herbert's friendship with Perrot, did much to heal the rift between them, but it was to be their service together at the siege and capture of St Quentin in July to August 1557 which set the seal on their reconciliation. On his return from military service Perrot was plunged yet again into bitter dispute with Catherne whom he took, after breaking into his house, into custody at Carew Castle. Both were summoned to appear before the council in June 1558 where Perrot was found to be at fault having 'exceeded his commission and misused himself'. After a brief period in the Fleet, Perrot was released on condition he agreed to be bound over in a recognizance of £200 to keep the peace.

Rising fortunes

Mary's death in November 1558 proved fortuitous for Perrot. A commission convened in September to investigate Catherne's accusations against him was allowed to lapse and on the accession of Elizabeth he was freed from yet another prison sentence, this time in the Marshalsea, to which he had been committed for non-appearance at court on an attachment for debt. Elizabeth favoured him, and as a mark of her trust he was appointed to be one of the four gentlemen chosen to carry the canopy of state at her coronation. In a remarkable series of appointments between 1559 and 1562—which included the stewardships of the manors of Carew, Coedra, and Narberth, the constableship of Narberth and Tenby castles, the gaolership of Haverfordwest prison (1559), election as mayor of Haverfordwest (1560), and by 1562 *custos*

rotulorum of the county borough of Haverfordwest and vice-admiralship of the coast of south Wales—Perrot consolidated his hold on the government and administration of Pembrokeshire. In addition to investing Perrot with profitable crown offices, the regime also showered him with grants of land and advowsons in south-west Wales and elsewhere in England. His commissionership in 1561 of concealed lands (principally those formerly belonging to the priory of Haverfordwest) added considerably to his own landed wealth but inevitably brought him into conflict with his neighbours, whose titles were thus challenged, and among those pursued was his old adversary Catherne. Perrot's relentless pursuit of power in Pembrokeshire during the 1560s and 1570s made him very unpopular and gave rise to an anti-Perrot faction which attempted to block, and not without a little success, his progress. In 1572, while Perrot was away in Ireland, they wrested control of the town of Haverfordwest from him and succeeded in having their man, Catherne's son-in-law Alban Stepney, elected to serve the borough as its MP. However, in the face of Perrot's increasing wealth and influence (he counted Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex, Sir Henry Sidney, and Sir Francis Walsingham among his friends and patrons), it never amounted to more than a rearguard action. Never shy of resorting to law to browbeat his enemies into submission, Perrot is said by his contemporary the antiquarian squire of Henllys, George Owen, to have ruined a number of gentlemen in the process of prosecuting, and being prosecuted by, them.

Ireland, 1571–1573

Although not the regime's first choice for service in Ireland to head the newly created presidency of Munster, Perrot's growing political and administrative experience, added to his rugged individualism and uncompromising approach to resolving problems, was thought fit for the task of settling this disturbed region of the realm. Plagued by rebellion since 1569, led by James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald, the province had first to be pacified before its reformation and plantation could properly begin. Offered the post in December 1570, Perrot reluctantly accepted, and in February 1571, in the company of his friend Thomas Butler (Black Tom), tenth earl of Ormond and (since 1559) treasurer of Ireland, he set sail for Waterford. On taking the oath before Lord Deputy Sidney, who departed Dublin for home within weeks of Perrot's being sworn in, the president made haste for Cork. Perrot continued the reign of terror initiated in Munster by his predecessor Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and in the space of two years he dispatched to the gallows over 800 rebels. But fitz Maurice proved to be a resourceful opponent and, hampered by lack of resources and manpower, Perrot took fully two years to bring the rebel to heel. Constant campaigning took its toll on Perrot, who complained in a letter to Walsingham that for every white hair he had brought over with him he could now show sixty. Dissatisfied with the level of support given him by the privy council, and angered by accusations of dishonesty and malpractice in his seizure of a Portuguese merchantman, the *Peter and Paul*, laden with valuable spices (for which a Parisian grocer attempted to sue him in court), Perrot took his leave of Ireland in July 1573.

Wales, 1573–1579

Since he had left Ireland without permission, Perrot's enemies fully expected the queen to issue a severe and public reprimand, but none came. Pleading ill health as an excuse for not returning to Munster, though the queen wished him to do so, Perrot retired home to Carew. In a letter to the queen's chief secretary, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Perrot declared that it was his intention 'to lead a countryman's life and to keep out of debt' (*CSP Ire.*, *1574–85*, 62). His retirement from public office had lasted a little less than eighteen months when in September 1574 Perrot was appointed to the council in the marches of Wales. In Pembrokeshire too he was busy consolidating his power, being joined by his son and heir, Thomas, whom he invested with the house and manor of Haroldston not long after the latter attained his majority. Serving consecutive terms as mayor of Haverfordwest (1575–7) finally put paid to the anti-Perrot faction, the scale of whose defeat can best

be appreciated by the fact that of the thirteen mayors elected in the fourteen years after Perrot's mayoralty (1577–91), all but three can be closely connected either with him or with his son Thomas.

Perrot's years at home, during which time he attended court infrequently, were well spent inasmuch as he busied himself with enlarging and better managing his estates. However, not everyone appreciated his agricultural improvements, nor the means he employed to increase significantly his income from his estates. Accusations of rack-renting, encroachments, and enclosures were upheld by his biographer and son Sir James who, while admitting that his father 'was somewhat complained of in his life-time', said that he had nevertheless 'improved his lands to a high rate' and in mitigation stated that 'there are none of his tenants but would be glad to takes leases thereof now, and pay somewhat more for it' (Perrot, *History*, 22). That Perrot did maintain 'the part rather of a nobleman than of a knight … in retinue, in house-keeping and in all other respects' (ibid., 21) is made manifest by the fact that he was able to take thirty-four servants kitted out in his livery, sporting the family's distinctive crest (namely 'parrot with pear in claw'), to serve him in Ireland. Of greater and lasting significance in respect of Perrot's public demonstration of his wealth and power were his ambitious building projects which involved the conversion of the medieval castles of Laugharne (granted him by the queen in 1575) and Carew into mansions of some architectural pretension. That neither was fully completed by the time of his death owed more to his political difficulties after 1590 than to any loss of interest on his part. Nor had he overreached himself financially, a more prudent man than in his youth; in April 1590 he managed to raise £1500 from current rents alone. Not without good reason did contemporaries credit him with being wealthy, but they tended also to exaggerate his riches.

Piracy

It was a restless Perrot—he had been badgering the privy council for some months with ideas on how Ireland might be better governed—that was called upon once again to serve the crown in a martial capacity, but this time at sea. In August 1579 he was given command of a squadron of ships and entrusted with the task of intercepting and destroying any Spanish or pirate vessel appearing off the southern coast of Ireland. Taking his son Thomas with him, Perrot cruised offshore for some weeks, occasionally putting into port and spending time ashore at Baltimore, Cork, and Waterford. At Waterford they met Perrot's successor as lord president of Munster, Sir William Drury, who shortly before his untimely death knighted his son, and Sir William George and Sir William Pelham.

Thinking that the danger of invasion had passed and with the closing of the season, in mid-October 1579 Perrot turned for home, but as he did so he came across a notorious pirate called Deryfold whom he determined to apprehend. Perrot gave chase and overtook his quarry near the Flemish coast, after which he made for the Thames. Unfortunately, his ship ran aground on the Kentish Knocks and as he and his companions struggled to cope with the storm that threatened to break up their vessel they prepared to die. As Perrot's:

nearest followers and friends came to take their last farewell of him, amongst the rest his son Sir Thomas was one to whom he said 'Well Boy, God bless you and I give you my blessing. I wish to God that you were ashore and the Queen's ship safe then I should care the less about myself.'

Perrot, *History*, 114–15

In fact Perrot, his son, and shipmates were spared when their ship, on the advice of Deryfold, righted itself and they sailed into the Thames and on to Greenwich Palace. Calls for his arrest on charges of misconduct and failure in his mission were ignored by the queen who reacted sympathetically to Perrot's request that Deryfold be pardoned for his exceptional and life-saving seamanship. However, such gallantry was viewed with suspicion by his enemies who had not long

before accused him of trafficking with pirates in Welsh waters. Attempts by his successor as vice-admiral of south Wales, Sir William Morgan of Pen-coed, and his deputy, Richard Vaughan of Whitland, to have Perrot arrested and charged came to nothing. Although Perrot cannot be declared entirely innocent in respect of his dealings with pirates, the extent to which he has been credited with becoming involved with them has been exaggerated.

Ireland again, 1584–1588

In 1584 the call for Perrot's services once again echoed within the walls of the court. The queen, determined to deal effectively but cheaply with Ireland, was sufficiently impressed by Perrot's treatise of 1581 on the better government of the island to offer him the opportunity to put his ideas into practice. Service in Ireland, that graveyard of reputations of which the wise steered clear, called to the ambitious, and, through a combination of his own ego, the queen's flattery, and the prestige that came with the position and influence of the lord deputyship of Ireland (and despite the earnest advice of his stepbrother Sir Henry Jones not to go), Perrot was seduced into accepting the appointment on 17 January 1584. Five months later, on 21 June, he arrived in Dublin where he received the sword of state from the chancellor, Adam Loftus. Perrot began his work with energy and enthusiasm, setting off on a tour of the country within days of his arrival. His aim was to see and to be seen, to overawe both native and Old English with a public demonstration of royal power which he hoped might foster a healthier respect for English law. He established his provincial presidents in Connaught and in Munster, Sir Richard Bingham and Sir John Norris respectively, sought, and was offered in Connaught, the submission of native Irish leaders, and prepared for the subjugation and plantation of Ulster.

Perrot was less an administrator than a soldier, and when an opportunity arose to take to the field against an invasion of Scots, acting in concert with a dissident Irish leader, Sorley Boy Mac Donnell, he did not hesitate. Perrot, together with the earl of Ormond and Donough O'Brien, earl of Thomond, hastened to meet the incursion in Ulster only to be disappointed to find the Scots departed. Nevertheless, he determined on the pacification of the region and took the submission of Turlough Luineach O'Neill, together with his only son as hostage. But his chief purpose was in evicting the Mac Donnells from their territory along the Antrim coast. A three-day siege of Dunluce Castle in September 1584 resulted in its fall and the capture of much booty, particularly valuable pieces of which he presented to Walsingham, Lady Walsingham, and Lord Burghley. Frustrated at his failure either to apprehend or assassinate Sorley Boy Mac Donnell, Perrot questioned the commitment of those around him.

Perrot's ambitious projects for Ireland—reforming the revenue system, the plantation and shiring of Ulster, the enforcement, and in some areas introduction, of English law, and the foundation of a university in Dublin—largely failed. His failure to get Poynings' law suspended, and to heal the differences between the Gaelic Irish, the Old English, and the New English, meant that his parliament (1585–6) and most of its intended legislation had to be abandoned. On the other hand, his military campaigns proved rather more successful and though he was forced, on the outbreak of war with Spain, to reach an accommodation with Sorley Boy Mac Donnell, Perrot had largely pacified Ireland. His four years in Ireland proved to be a mixture of some achievements, bitter disappointments, increasing ill health (he was suffering kidney- and gallstones), and a growing fear of dying in that 'slimy country'. It was a crestfallen Perrot who wrote to Walsingham informing him of the death of his second son, William, in July 1587 and asking to be relieved of his duties as lord deputy. In his final months in office Perrot was displaying signs of a more violent and tempestuous disposition, resulting in several brawls with his ministers and in utter frustration on Perrot's part, expressed in oaths. He had alienated former friends and supporters such as the earl of Ormond, who resorted to his usual practice of undermining the position of serving lord deputies at court, and Secretary Sir Geoffrey Fenton, who at first had found him 'affable and pleasing' but had since

changed his opinion. Worse still, he had quarrelled with his provincial presidents, Bingham and Norris, and had made avowed enemies in Chancellor Loftus, Treasurer Sir Henry Wallop, and marshal Sir Nicholas Bagnal. Nevertheless, when he handed on the sword of state to his successor, Sir William Fitzwilliam, the latter was compelled to admit that he left the country in a state of peace.

Final years and downfall

Perrot returned from Ireland in July 1588 with his reputation intact, quite a feat in the Elizabethan period, and within days had been appointed lieutenant-general of the three south-west shires of Wales under Henry Herbert, second earl of Pembroke, and entrusted with the task of organizing their defence in the face of a possible Spanish invasion. Before the end of the year Perrot had secured his election as member for Haverfordwest and as he prepared to attend the opening of parliament, on 4 February 1589, he was summoned by the queen, who confirmed his appointment to the privy council. This proved to be the high point of his career for, unbeknown to him, the foundations of his position and influence at court were soon to be undermined. As early as 25 March 1589 Thomas Widebank wrote to Walsingham that he had had his audience with the queen immediately after Sir John Perrot had left her: 'what had passed he knows not, but he found her out of tune' (*CSP dom.*, *1584–91*, 584). The agenda for their discussion concerned the queen's request for a bill against the embezzling of her armour and weapons which, for some unknown reason, had caused them to fall out.

Perrot's Irish service, and continuing influence in directing Irish affairs, as revealed by the council book entry 'Lord Buckhurst, Sir John Perrot, Mr. Fortescue did sit to hear Irish causes' (*APC*, 18.76), proved to be the catalyst for his enemies to bring him down. Perrot's successor as lord deputy, Sir William Fitzwilliam, came to resent his influence on Irish affairs within the privy council which he believed might end in his own disgrace. To exacerbate the situation an increasing number of Irish nobles, and even members of the Irish council, were either ignoring or bypassing Fitzwilliam and writing directly to Perrot. A disgruntled Fitzwilliam wrote to his patron Burghley, 'My credit and service is already in the balance and cannot stand long overthrown' (TNA: PRO, SP 63/147, no. 35).

Unsurprisingly, by October 1589 resentment had turned to open hostility as the two men traded insults, with Perrot alleging bribery and corruption on the part of Fitzwilliam. In February 1590 Fitzwilliam hit back hard when he accused Perrot of treason, in that he had consorted with known traitors, notably Brian O'Rourke and Sir William Stanley, and conspired with the king of Spain to remove the queen, for which he expected to be granted Wales! The queen ordered an investigation which made slow progress, mainly on account of the dubious quality of the evidence and the general unreliability of the chief witness for the prosecution, an Irish ex-priest called Denis O'Roughan. Nothing daunted, Perrot's accusers persisted and the case against him gathered momentum, particularly so after the death of his patron Sir Francis Walsingham in April 1590. By the end of the following month Perrot was placed under house arrest at Burghley's Strand residence while the charges were further investigated. A clearly distraught Perrot wrote to a friend, 'I do here … grow to utter contempt and no thing hath so much hurt me as wind whispered in corners' (Evans, 220–21). This whispering campaign soon turned into an avalanche of calls for his head. He was formally charged in December 1590 and in March 1591 he was removed to the Tower.

More than a year elapsed before Perrot's trial, and in a letter written in December 1591 he complained that his memory was becoming impaired through grief and close confinement. Eventually, on 27 April 1592, he was tried at Westminster on a charge of high treason before the court of queen's bench. According to the indictment he was charged with using contemptuous words about the queen, helping known traitors and Romish priests, encouraging the rebellion of O'Rourke, and lastly, writing treasonable letters to Philip of Spain and the traitor Stanley. The prosecution

concentrated upon the first charge, in which the evidence of Perrot's former secretary Philip Williams, who now served Fitzwilliam in the same capacity, proved decisive. The following remarks were attributed to the accused:

Stick not so much upon Her Majesty's letter, she may command what she will, but we will do what we list. Ah, silly woman, now she shall not curb me, she shall not rule me now. God's wounds, this it is to serve a base bastard pissing kitchen woman, if I had served any prince in Christendom I have not been so dealt withal

Bodl. Oxf., MS Willis 58, fols. 247–8, 263–305; Bodl. Oxf., MS Tanner 299, fol. 477

Perrot, who was extremely agitated throughout his trial, did not deny that he might have spoken the words attributed to him but he resented the interpretation placed upon them. In spite of a spirited defence, and to his utter astonishment, Perrot was found guilty and condemned to death on 26 June 1592; thereafter he languished in the Tower awaiting his fate. Even towards the end Perrot never believed that he would be found guilty, much less executed. He took comfort from the fact that the queen had stayed judgement against him on six occasions. However, unbeknown to him the architect of his downfall was no less a man than Burghley who, before and throughout the trial, presented himself in public as a friend and ally but in secret wrought his destruction.

Death and reputation

Perrot's last will and testament, dated 3 May 1592 (an earlier will made in August 1584 is still extant), is over three pages long and, in reality, is nothing more than a vindication of his conduct and an appeal for mercy; none came. Perrot died on 3 November 1592 and was buried on 10 November in the church of St Peter ad Vincula within the Tower. He died before sentence could be carried out or, as seems likely in view of the crown's favourable treatment of his family, before the queen could issue a pardon. Certainly, his widow was granted Carew for a term of years and his son Sir Thomas was, with the active support of his brother-in-law Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, restored in blood to the family's estates in March 1593, less than four months after the death of his father. Despite the long accepted story of his natural death, there are grounds for believing that Perrot may in fact have been poisoned; this lends credence to the idea that his pardon was imminent since his enemies could ill afford to risk his wrath upon release.

Contemporaries were not slow to offer reasons why Sir John Perrot fell from grace and died in the ignominious way that he did. Naunton, who had married his granddaughter Penelope, suggested that it was in part due to the fact that he was 'a person that loved to stand too much alone, and on his own legs' (Naunton, 44). Perrot's son Sir James was more direct, stating that he was, 'more apt to give offence unto great ones than to creep or crouch unto them which in the end procured his ruin' (BL, Add. MS 4819, fol. 118b). It is generally agreed that Perrot's choleric nature and haughty pride, combined with the envy and competition of others, contributed to his downfall. He was too blunt and arrogant a man, 'as far from flattery as from fear', to fit easily into the polite ways and manners of the Elizabethan court. His scornful dismissal of Sir Christopher Hatton as someone who had made his way to the queen's favour 'by the galliard' reveals much about the attitude of the man. The words of one who knew him well, Sir Francis Walsingham, might perhaps serve as a fitting epitaph:

It cannot be doubted that Sir John Perrot's intentions and purpose … were very honourable, but his course has not been agreeable to our humour. He might have lived in better season in the time of King Henry VIII, when princes were resolute to persist in honourable attempts, whereunto [Perrot] must be content to conform himself as other men do.

ibid.,

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Likenesses

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Wealth at Death

personal and household possessions valued at between £1000 and £2000; rental income from estate est. to be a little short of £2000 p.a.: Evans, 'Sir John Perrot', 301–56

Perrot, George

(1710–1780)

- G. F. R. Barker
- , revised by Anne Pimlott Baker

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Perrot, George (1710–1780), judge, was baptized on 24 June 1710 at Barwick in Elmet, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, the second son in the family of eleven children of the Revd Thomas Perrot—prebendary of Ripon and rector of Welbury in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and of St Martin-in-Micklegate, York—and his wife, Anastasia, daughter of the Revd George Plaxton, rector of Barwick in Elmet. He went to Westminster School in 1722, was admitted to the Inner Temple in November 1728, and was called to the bar in 1732. In 1742 he married Mary (*c.*1702–1784), daughter of William Bower of Bridlington, Yorkshire, and widow of Peter Whitton, lord mayor of York in 1728. They had no children.

In May 1757 he was elected a bencher of the Inner Temple, and in 1759 was made a king's counsel. On 16 April 1760 he opened the case against Laurence Shirley, fourth Earl Ferrers, on trial in the House of Lords for murder. On 24 January 1763 he was created a serjeant-at-law and appointed fourth baron of the exchequer. He was taken ill in Maidstone, Kent, during the Lent assizes in 1775, and retired from the bench on 15 May 1775 with a pension of £1200 a year.

Perrot moved to Pershore, Worcestershire, where he had extensive estates, including the River Avon from Tewkesbury to Evesham, and there he died on 28 January 1780. A monument was erected in his memory in the parish church at Laleham, Middlesex.

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